THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) The Prime minister of the Russian Federation during his visit to New Delhi in December 1998 described India as "an influential member of the international community" and "a strong and appropriate candidate" for permanent membership of an expanded UN Security Council. There is wide agreement on the need for inclusion of developing countties in any expansion of permanent membership of the UN Security council. However, there is as yet no agreement on the candidates, or criteria.

Nuclear tests by Pakistan

369. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI AKHILESH DAS:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Govt's attention was drawn to the news-item published in the Times of India dated January 18, 1999, captioned "Are Pak N-arms more dangerous" referring to a CIA revelation that the material used in the nuclear tests by Pakistan in May 1998 contained low levels of weapon grade plutonium; and

(b) if so, how far and in what respect the Nuclear bombs tested by Pakistan were more dangerous or potentially more dangerous?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Nuclear devices, whether based on fission of Uranium or Plutonium, cause the same effect if the yield is identical. However, the CIA revelations, about the possibility of transfer of Plutonium from a third country to Pakistan, if correct, would be a matter of concern.

Safe stay of Mr. Rongthong Dorjee in India

370. SHRI DAWA LAMA: Will the MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would ensure safe stay or Mr. rongthong Kunley Dorjee in India as a free person; and

(b) whether Government would initiate a dialogue with Bhutan and Nepal to ensure the safe return of people driven out of Bhutan and staying in India?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH):

(a) Judicial proceedings for the extradition of Rongthong Kunley Dorjee are in progress, pursuant to the request made by Royal Government of Bhutan, under Extradition Agreement signed between India and Bhutan in 1996. Mr. Dorjee is on bail while the matter remains sub-judice.

(b) Indian and Bhutanese citizens enjoy the facility of an open border between the two countries. As far as the issue of refugees claiming Bhutanese nationality, staying in Nepal, is concerned, this is being discussed bilaterally betwen Bhutan and Nepal. While Government of India would welcome the resolution of this issue to the mutual satisfaction of Bhutan and Nepal, its considered position is that involvement of any third party will only complicate the matter and make it more intractable.

US Ambassador's remark on India's Nuclear Preparedness

371. SHRI RAGHAVJI:
PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA:

Will the MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether US Ambassador to India has recently questioned India's nuclear preparedness to meet potent threats from